

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

476 discharge of their functions. Tradition approves of such an arrangement, and mutual trust and inter-dependence ensure its continuity. Where this arrangement is accepted, a system of attachment of some families to certain other families naturally follows. Agriculture being the most important activity of the countryside, the number of agriculturists is naturally the largest in the village population. These constitute the bulk of those who require and accept the occupational services of small caste groups offering them. Even the occupational castes stand in need of one another's services, although the number of families from each caste offering them within a village community is of necessity small. Each family will, therefore, attach itself to a number of families in the village and offer them services both in agricultural pursuits and socio-religious rites and ceremonies. Among the occupational castes themselves also there is a system of family attachments in operation. In Shamirpet some family affiliations date back to the time of the foundation of the village. Later immigrants either secured the services of some of the established families of the occupational castes, or they made arrangements with some of the newcomers to the village belonging to those castes.

476 This system is both complex and delicate. It is not easy for an
623 agriculturist to remove a family attached to his household and
626 secure the services of another. For example, A, a barber, is attached to the family of B, an agriculturist. If for any reason B is greatly dissatisfied with the services of A and wants those of another, he cannot abruptly dismiss A. His difficulty will not be in dismissing him, but in finding a substitute. Each of these castes has its own inter-village council. Occupational castes have a developed trade unionism, and their code of professional ethics and etiquette too is very rigid. The dismissed person will be protected by this professional etiquette. No one else would be willing to act as a substitute, for fear of being penalized by the caste *panchayat*. It may even be difficult for a number of families to join together and import a family belonging to that occupational caste from a different village. First, under these conditions of tension, an outside family would not come for fear of social pressure and ultimate ostracism for such an action. And if they do come, the caste fellows already in the village will make things very difficult, even unbearable, for them. In the course of our investigations,